

IN THE CLAIMS:

1-5. (canceled)

6. (currently amended)            A laser welding method, which comprises:  
supplying a filler wire to a welding object portion, and  
welding the welding object portion by immediate physical irradiation of  
the welding object portion directly by a focused laser beam from a laser source;  
wherein the filler wire is supplied obliquely from forward or backward in  
a welding advance direction such that an angle between the supplying direction  
of the filler wire and a beam axis of the laser beam is less than 45°.

7. (currently amended)            A laser welding method as claimed in  
claim 1, wherein the filler wire is only supplied from backward of the laser  
beam with respect to the welding advance direction.

8. (currently amended)            A laser welding method as claimed in  
claim 1, wherein the filler wire is supplied independently from the laser beam ~~is a focused laser beam~~.

9. (currently amended)            A laser welding method as claimed in  
claim 6, wherein the laser beam is supplied in a direction ~~substantially~~  
perpendicular to a welding advance direction.

10. (currently amended)      A laser welding method, which comprises:  
supplying a filler wire to a welding object portion, and  
welding the welding object portion by irradiation with a laser beam,  
including weaving the laser beam in a sinusoidal pattern relative to a direction  
substantially perpendicular to a welding advance direction;

wherein the filler wire is supplied obliquely from forward or backward in  
the welding advance direction such that an angle between the supplying  
direction of the filler wire and a beam axis of the laser beam is less than 45°.

11. (previously presented)      A laser welding method as claimed in  
claim 10, wherein the filler wire is supplied from backward of the laser beam  
with respect to the welding advance direction.

12. (currently amended)      A laser welding method ~~as claimed in~~  
~~claim 10~~, which comprises:  
supplying a filler wire to a welding object portion, and  
welding the welding object portion by irradiation with a laser beam,  
including weaving the laser beam in a direction substantially perpendicular to  
a welding advance direction;

wherein the filler wire is supplied obliquely from forward or backward in  
the welding advance direction such that an angle between the supplying

direction of the filler wire and a beam axis of the laser beam is less than 45°

and the welding is carried out satisfying the following relationship:

$$V_w/F \leq 2D/\sin\theta$$

where  $\theta$  is an angle between the beam axis L and a supplying direction of the filler wire, D is key hole diameter,  $V_w$  is a supplying speed of the filler wire, and F is a weaving frequency of the laser beam.

13. (new)            A laser welding method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the laser beam irradiates the welding object portion without use of an optical fiber.